

VZCZCXRO6418
OO RUEHSL
DE RUEHAK #1839/01 3621354
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 281354Z DEC 09
FM AMEMBASSY ANKARA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1567
INFO RUEHZG/NATO EU COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE
RHEHAAA/NSC WASHDC IMMEDIATE
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC IMMEDIATE
RUEKJCS/JCS WASHDC IMMEDIATE
RUEHAK/USDAO ANKARA TU IMMEDIATE
RUEHAK/TSR ANKARA TU IMMEDIATE
RUEUITH/ODC ANKARA TU IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 001839

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR EUR/SE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/28/2019

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [TU](#)

SUBJECT: TENSIONS SPIKE AMIDST DEPUTY PM ASSASSINATION PLOT CLAIM

REF: A. ANKARA 834

[1](#)B. 07 ANKARA 1006

[1](#)C. ANKARA 1691 AND PREVIOUS

[1](#)D. ANKARA 1805

Classified By: Ambassador James F. Jeffrey, Reasons 1.4 (b,d)

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: Prosecutors and police conducted extensive, unprecedented searches in the Turkish General Staff (TGS) Special Forces Mobility Command on December 25 following the arrest of two special forces officers for allegedly targeting Deputy PM Bulent Arinc for assassination. TGS Chief GEN Basbug, accompanied by Land Forces Commander GEN Kosaner, held a meeting with PM Erdogan on December 26. Following the meeting, the military granted civilian investigators permission to search a location in the military facility where top secret documents are reportedly held. Ten active duty military personnel have been detained following the searches, including the two officers initially arrested. The explosive allegation of the military plotting the assassination of DPM Arinc led to a spike in civ-mil tensions, but the December 26 meeting between Basbug and Erdogan appears to dial back tensions for now and likely signals the military's willingness to allow this investigation to run its course. END SUMMARY.

Assassination Plot Allegations

[1](#)2. (C) Two special forces officers were detained by police on December 19 while sitting in parked vehicles near the residence of Deputy Prime Minister Bulent Arinc, an important figure in the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) who is also known for his strong Islamist leanings. According to media reporting, the officers were arrested for targeting Arinc for assassination. The prosecutors and police conducted searches of the officers' homes following the arrest and seized computer and electronic equipment; the officers were released later the same day. As media speculation over this incident swirled, the Turkish General Staff (TGS) released a written statement on December 23 declaring that the officers were investigating a member of the military who lived in the area of Arinc's residence and was suspected of leaking classified information.

Unprecedented Search

[1](#)3. (C) On the evening of December 25 the Ankara prosecutor accompanied by the Turkish National Police presented a warrant to search the offices of the suspected officers. These offices are located in the TGS Special Forces Mobility

Headquarters. According to a column by influential columnist Murat Yetkin, this was an unprecedented move in Turkey's civilian-military relations as the warrant was presented without any advance notice to the military.

14. (C) The search by civilian law enforcement of a TGS military headquarters was made possible by a controversial law passed in June 2009 which granted the civilian judiciary jurisdiction over cases involving the military in major crimes, including coup plotting (ref a). Military officials reportedly limited the access of investigators to the offices of the suspected officers during this initial search, which forced the prosecutor to seal off the premises and obtain an additional warrant for searches in other locations within the military facility. Eight military personnel were detained following the search, which ended in the early morning hours of December 26, according to a December 26 TGS statement.

Basbug and Erdogan Meets

15. (C) CHOD Basbug, accompanied by Turkish Land Forces Commander (and likely TGS chief beginning in August 2010) GEN Isik Kosaner, visited PM Erdogan's residence on December 26 in what appeared to be an unscheduled meeting. The PM's office released a statement following the three-hour meeting indicating that the three had met to prepare for the December 28 National Security Council (MGK) meeting. (Comment: The meeting was unusual for two reasons: 1) It reportedly was not previously scheduled; and 2) Basbug typically meets one-on-one with Erdogan. To Post's knowledge, this was the

ANKARA 00001839 002 OF 002

first Erdogan-Basbug meeting in which Kosaner was included. End Comment).

A Second Search

16. (SBU) On the evening of December 26, following the Erdogan-Basbug-Kosaner meeting, the prosecutors and police, accompanied by representatives from the military prosecutors' office, conducted a second search of the Special Force Mobility Command Headquarters. This time, the investigators were reportedly allowed to access areas containing top secret information. The second search, according to press reports, took 27 hours and ended late in the evening on December 27.

17. (SBU) In a message issued concerning the investigations issued on December 27, PM Erodgan said "a whole institution should not be blamed for mistakes made by a few officials," and that "if there is evidence against the suspects, they will appear before justice without granting any privileges to anybody."

Comment

18. (C) The highly-charged investigation into the alleged plot to assassinate DPM Arinc has increased civilian-military tensions to a level not seen since the "e-memo" of April 2007 (ref b). This investigation comes amidst already rising tensions between the military and civilian authorities over the broader investigations into Ergenekon (ref c). The meeting between Erodgan and the current and presumed future military chiefs could have been an opportunity for the military to draw a line in the sand. Instead the civilian authorities have apparently gained the upper hand again, and were able to carry out searches in some of the most sensitive facilities for the Turkish military, further indicating the military's willingness to allow this investigation to run its course. It remains to be seen, however, how much more the TGS is willing to tolerate. Basbug recently signaled publicly (ref d) that the military is tiring of what it considers an asymmetrical psychological campaign against the Turkish Armed Forces. Nonetheless, if credible evidence is

found linking the highest levels of the military to a plot to assassinate Arinc, this could spell the end of GEN Basbug's tenure, which is set to expire in August 2010 (a "rogue" operation by special forces personnel not endorsed by the TGS leadership is also a possibility). As an indication of the high-level TGS attention into this most recent investigation, Deputy TGS Chief Aslan Guner's office contacted Ambassador early on December 28 to cancel a previously scheduled meeting that was to take place the same day, as Guner was too occupied with the investigation.

JEFFREY

"Visit Ankara's Classified Web Site at <http://www.intelink.sgov.gov/wiki/Portal:Turkey>"